

**THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART  
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Fine stamps are a key to a country's culture and artistic stature. In 1870 the United States Postmaster General wrote "the good fame of nations, as relates to the arts, rests upon such small things as postage stamps."

Steel engraving is the finest method of reproduction giving gem-like clarity and an air of quality and distinction. Today other processes are used as well. The artist must design with the potentialities and limitations of his medium in mind.

The first postage stamp was issued in England in 1840. Early designs and some modern ones are influenced by miniature art objects like cameos, medals and coins. Truly creative artists realize however that as an art form the stamp need not imitate other arts and have given us original and distinctive designs. The reproduction of a country's famous art objects is another matter as it acquaints people at home and abroad with the world's treasures.

Artists creating postage stamps compose letter type, numerals and subject matter within a strictly limited area. Letter type tells the country and form of service as air mail or parcel post. Numerals indicate denominations and dates. Subject matter may be insignia, coats of arms, portraits of sovereigns, famous people, artists, historic events, characteristic architecture and landscape, wild life and flowers, native occupations, costumes and customs. Borders or frames may enhance the stamp but are not essential. Fine color contributes much to the beauty of a stamp.

The successful artist has a fine sense of scale and so arranges the varied but essential forms in relation to one another within the space that the final design is an effective unity.

Characteristic of French stamps are fine quality and design and the wide range and interest of subject matter; of Russian stamps the use of deep, warm, rich colors; of Polish, Swedish, Swiss, German, Icelandic, Finnish and Czechoslovakian stamps, fine craftsmanship and distinctive design. The stamps of Liechtenstein are exquisite in detail, often with superb borders. Stamps of the United States tend to reproduce in miniature subjects suited to huge canvasses.